## COLERAINE TOWN CHARTER 1613

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The town of Coleraine was granted its own royal charter on 28 June 1613 by King James I.

This charter allowed the town to trade, to hold markets, to send representatives to Parliament and established the first corporate body in Coleraine based on the same local government system as London.

Tristram Beresford, agent of The Honourable The Irish Society, was the first mayor for Coleraine Common Council. The corporate body was made up of the mayor, twelve aldermen and twenty-four burgesses – all of whom were selected in the town charter. The mayor was to have an English recorder, a sword bearer and two sergeants-at-mace. In the 1600s the only regular meeting of this Council was on 25 December. The council met in the upper room of the courthouse which was then on the corner of Church Street and Bellhouse Lane.

The mayor of the town had considerable power and the right to fine people for wrongdoings. Members of the council could be fined for using indecent behaviour or language at a meeting, for not attending a meeting (which could be called at very short notice) and for not accompanying the mayor to church on a Sunday. At a meeting on the 22 January 1676 it was decided that the mayor and aldermen were to wear purple robes and the burgesses black robes.

In order to practise your trade inside the walls of the fortified town of Coleraine you had to be a freeman. You could become a freeman by invitation, or by paying a fine. The fine was a monetary value, decided by the mayor, and a silver spoon.

▶ Urban District Council of Coleraine seal.

Coleraine Common Council was established in the town charter. It was based on the system used in London. Richard Rich, the town recorder, complained

that the whole corporation was governed by three persons at the most.

The Coleraine Town charter was ordered to be delivered for use by the Society in London.

The charter was removed and the corporation dissolved. In its place the Coleraine Town Commissioners were now an elective body for cleaning, lighting and 'watching' the town,

with a chairman and treasurer.

With the introduction of a local government bill, the new Coleraine Urban District Council

held its first meeting. An application for a municipal charter of

incorporation was approved and the new Coleraine Borough Council was elected in 1929.

Under the Local Government (NI) Act existing local authorities were abolished.

The new Coleraine Borough Council formed – it consisted of Coleraine, the urban councils of Portrush and Portstewart and the rural councils.

Queen Anne Mace of 1702 presented

to the Coleraine Town Commissioners

by The Honourable The Irish Society as

compensation for lands.

'The powers it gives the Commissioners for the improvement of the town, the cleansing of houses and streets, the making of sewers, the protection of property, the prevention of fire, regulation of lodging houses and many other matters, all calculated to improve the health and morality of the people, and the trade of the town."

By a royal charter, dated

29 December 1928, Coleraine

was again created a borough

- the Borough of Coleraine.

Photograph of the Coleraine

sword and mace, c.1890s.

▼ Alderman Daniel Hall Christie O.P.,

the first mayor of Coleraine under

its new charter, was admitted an

Coleraine on 12 December 1934.

honorary burgess of the Borough of

Coleraine Chronicle 1 October 1859.







First Mayor of the Borough of Coleraine under its new Charter of incorporation was admitted an Honorary Burgess of the Borough of Coleraine in recognition of the signal service he has rendered in the advancement of Coleraine and the good of the Community during fifteen years membership of the Council and in appreciation of the deep and practical interest he has taken and the valuable time he has spent in every cause having for its object the success of the Borough and the health, happiness,

enjoyment and prosperity of its people.

Signed-

COLERAS E LA Celebrating 400 years of Coleraine's town charter